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> 11/26/93 STR 948 "The Original * Independent * Online Magazine!"
  """""""""""""""""
- CPU INDUSTRY REPORT   - SOUND CARDS COVERED!   - Claris Rebates
- Computer BlackMail   - Catalog CD-ROMs!   - Computer Divorce?
- AMBRA Lineup!   - FREEHAND 4 Ships!   - DSP Updates!
- Lyn Cerrig (A peek)   - MAC VIRUS ALERT!   - The Old TackleBox

                 -* ALDUS OFFERS SPECIALS! *-
                 -* DIAMOND'S SONIC "BOOM!" *-
                     -* JAGUAR SHIPS! *-

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STReport International Online Magazine
The Original * Independent * Online Magazine
-* FEATURING WEEKLY *-
"Accurate UP-TO-DATE News and Information"
Current Events, Original Articles, Tips, Rumors, and Information
Hardware - Software - Corporate - R & D - Imports
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> From the Editor's Desk   "Saying it like it is!"
   """"""""""""""""""""""

      Since the other editors have already mentioned about their "Turkey
Day" encounters, I'll simply say I enjoyed Thanksgiving to the fullest.
I certainly hope you did too. This year's crop of new goodies for the
computing community, enthusiasts and businesses alike, is phenomenal.
Over the next few months we shall endeavor to bring as much of this
information to you as possible.

Naturally, the software and hardware we are sent will get "preferential"
treatment in that we'll have "hands-on" experiences to relate to you.
As always you can expect the "Say it like it is" approach we are famous
for. Since the influx of so many hardware and software packages for
review and test has started, we'll be placing the more involved reports
on an "every other week" basis. This is being done to allow more to be
presented to you each week without making the issues huge.

      The "shakeout" in the computing world is becoming more obvious with
every passing day. Some companies are fading away, others are changing
their product lines completely and still, others are very busy bathing in
the light of enlightenment. What it all boils down to is; the consumer
has and is continuing to speak. The days of the computer companies
telling the consumer what they want are over. (thankfully) Other areas
of the electronics industry learned this basic fact of life and survival
almost a decade ago after trying to foist ridiculous and obviously
proprietary product lines on the consumers. They didn't go for it then
and the consumers will not go for it now. Especially in their purchases
of computer hardware and software. Cross platform compatibility is the
key word, the main phrase, the name of the game. Watch for this type of
design and marketing to become the backbone of the industry very shortly.

Obviously, we will continue to support the few orphaned computers we now
support until such time as they simply ..fade away.

     Last, I wish to thank all those who took the time to make
suggestions on the future of STReport and its new format. Keep those
letters coming it all helps.

                              Ralph.....

     """Duckworth"""""

 STReport's Staff   DEDICATED TO SERVING YOU!
 """""""""""""""

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                         """""""""""""""""""
                         Ralph F. Mariano

                 Lloyd E. Pulley, Editor, Current Affairs

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IBM/POWER-PC/PC SECTION (I)
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Computer Products Update - CPU Report
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Weekly Happenings in the Computer World

Issue #48

By: Lloyd E. Pulley, Sr.

******* General Computer News *******

** Sun to Invest in NeXT **

   Sources say that Sun Microsystems Inc. is ready to invest in Steve
Jobs' NeXT Computer Inc. It's reported that Sun will invest $10 million
in NeXT for 1.5% of the company's stock and access to NeXT technology. A
Sun spokesman told the press the partnership involves Sun investing in
NeXT's object-oriented software development, but declined further
details.

   NeXT initially produced workstations that ran the company's NeXTStep
operating system software, but later withdrew from the hardware business
to focus solely on the NeXTStep software.

   Last spring, Dell Computer Corp., Epson America Inc. and NEC announ-
ced plans to ship products with NeXTStep installed. Hewlett-Packard Co.
also has marketed some PCs with the NeXTStep inside and NeXT's products
also have been backed by Canon Inc. and IBM.

"Micron Semi Intros 1MB SRAM Chips"

   Micron Semiconductor has announced engineering samples of its one meg
static random access memory (SRAM) chips for use as cache memory in per-
sonal computers.

   The company says the chips are available in 64kb x 16, 128kb x 8, and
256kb x 4 organizations. The chips use a center-pin power and ground
design Micron says allows faster operation and minimizes noise at the
higher speeds.

   Micron also claims the chips are designed specifically for cache me-

mory in workstations, file servers, desktops, and portable PCs, and will
be available in both five- and 3.3-volt versions. The five-volt chips
are available in speeds as fast as 12 nanoseconds (ns) and the 3.3-volt
versions in speeds as fast as 15 ns.

** Microsoft Co-Founder Buys into Ticketmaster **

   Paul Allen, the co-founder of Microsoft, has agreed to buy a majority
share in the parent of Ticketmaster Corp, a leading computerized ticket-
er that serves 2,500 clients in 40 states, Europe, Canada and Australia.

   Paul Allen retired a billionaire from Microsoft in 1983 at the age of
31 and is a major shareholder in America Online, a computer-based infor-
mation service.

   It is thought that Allen probably has some sort of link in mind to
connect Ticketmaster's computerized ticketing and the tens of millions
of personal computers that can tap into it through Amercia Online.

   Sources say that Allen invested well over $300 million in Ticketmast-
er and will probably become Ticketmaster's chairman.

** Computer 'Unfaithfulness" Leads to a Divorce Petition **

   An Israeli man seeks a divorce, alleging his wife was unfaithful be-
cause of her use of "filthy computer games."

   Reports say the unidentified man said in a written plea to a Tel Aviv
rabbinical court, "My wife watches a lot of porn movies and what's more
she likes to cheat on me in her thoughts by playing filthy computer
games."

   He added, "There is no difference between a woman who has a physical
relationship with other men and a woman who imagines it."

   The petition called the wife a "theoretical adulteress."

   If the court accepts that the woman has committed adultery, divorce
is granted automatically in Israel where rabbis have a monopoly on mar-
riage, divorce and burial for Jews, practicing or not.

** New York Computer Business Owner Arrested for Virus Threat **

   The owner and a technician of a Manhattan computer business have been
charged with threatening to unleash a computer virus that could potenti-
ally do $500,000 in damage to a New York business owner.

   Michael Lafaro, owner of MJL Design, surrendered this week to Nassau
County (New York) police for his role in the plot to force a complaining
client to pay his bills in full.

   The MJL Design technician, John Puzzo, was arrested Nov. 12 after he
removed the virus he allegedly installed at Forecast Inc., a video fur-
niture company in Westbury, N.Y.

   Police said that William Haberman, owner of Forecast, bought a compu-
ter program from MJL Design on Nov. 10, but after complaining to Lafaro

about its effectiveness, he made only a partial payment.

   Lafaro then allegedly had Puzzo install a computer virus and sent
Haberman a message saying that if full payment was not received, the
virus would destroy all data on the computer on Nov. 15. If that hap-
pened, the action would have cost Haberman about $500,000 in damages.

   After contacting police, Haberman was told to pay Lafaro on the con-
dition he Puzzo return to Forecast to remove the virus. When the techni-
cian did this, he was arrested.

   Computer tampering became a felony in New York on Nov. 1. Coercion
was already a felony. Each crime carries a penalty of four to seven
years on conviction.

                 ******* General PC News *******

          ** Ambra Targets Power Users With PCI-Based Pentium PCs **

   Ambra Computer, the US IBM spinoff launched last August, has announ-
ced a new line of Pentium computers based on the PCI local bus. The new
PCI-based machines are highly customizable, and targeted at the budget-
conscious enhanced or "power" user, according to Craig Conrad, a company
spokesperson.

   At the low end of the new Ambra DP60 PCI lineup is a machine that of-
fers a 60mhz superscalar Pentium processor, a 340-meg hard drive, 8 megs
of memory, a 256k processor cache, a 3.5-inch diskette drive, seven ex-
pansion slots, six storage bays, a PCI graphics accelerator, and a 14-
inch Super VGA color monitor. Also included are MS-DOS, Microsoft Win-
dows, a mouse, and a keyboard, for a total price of $2,799.

   A high-end model, priced at $3,499, substitutes a 440-meg hard drive
and 15-inch flat-square monitor, while adding a double-speed CD-ROM
(compact disc - read only memory) drive and Diamond Viper PCI graphics
accelerator complete with 2-meg of video-random access memory (VRAM).

          ** Rebate Offered on ClarisWorks and Quicken Bundle **

   Claris Corp. this week announced a rebate offer on ClarisWorks for
Windows.

   Customers who purchase ClarisWorks for Windows bundled with Intuit's
Quicken finance program will receive a $50 rebate directly from Claris.
The offer will be available in the U.S. through Jan. 31, 1994, when the
bundling promotion ends.

   The ClarisWorks-Quicken for Windows bundle is currently available at
Claris' authorized resellers for a suggested promotional price of $129.
With the rebate, the price to the user comes down to $79.

                 ******* General Mac News *******

     ** Apple, Two Others to Distribute Catalogs on Compact Discs **

Distributing mail-order catalogs on Macintosh-compatible compact discs is the goal of a project dubbed En Passant being launched by Apple Computer Inc. and two other companies. Reports say Apple will distribute its first disc to 22,000 homes and 8,000 businesses next month.

Offered on the CD-ROM discs will be products from 21 catalogs, including Lands' End Inc., Patagonia Inc., L.L. Bean Inc. and Tiffany & Co., as well as Apple.

The disc is designed to run only on Macintosh systems, but backers says if the test is successful, Apple will design a similar marketing system for the computers running Microsoft Corp.'s Windows operating system.

Working with Apple will be Electronic Data Systems Corp., which will provide a phone exchange system for the venture, and Redgate Communications Corp., which will put together the disc contents.

** Apple, Fujitsu to Work Together on CD-Rom Software Projects **

Apple Japan Inc. and Fujitsu Ltd. are going to work together to develop compatible applications for Apple's Macintosh and Fujitsu's FM TOWNS platforms, first by exchanging proprietary program data.

Reports say Apple and Fujitsu also will trade data on the distribution of CD-ROM titles to foster a growing multimedia environment.

** Aldus Ships FreeHand 4.0 for the Mac **

Aldus Corp. this week announced it has begun shipment of Aldus FreeHand 4.0 for the Apple Macintosh, a major upgrade to its advanced graphic design and illustration software program.

The software's new capabilities include enhanced text controls, intuitive color controls, a streamlined user interface, extensive graphic capabilities and multi-page layout functions.

Aldus FreeHand 4.0 for the Apple Macintosh is System 7 - savvy. The recommended system configuration is any Apple Mac IIci series or greater, PowerBook, Macintosh Quadra, 8MB of RAM, a 120MB hard drive, a mouse or a drawing digitizing tablet with stylus.

Availability and pricing Aldus FreeHand 4.0 for the Macintosh costs $595. Registered users of prior versions can upgrade for $150.

** New Macintosh Products **

Here is a brief look at some new Macintosh products on the market: File Clerk software, ColorScript Laser1000 printer, PowerBook 145B Plus Pack, Americans in Space CD-ROM, new Adobe Typefaces.

Nisus Software announced File Clerk, software due this fall designed to make it easier to track down information on data-packed Macs.

To organize and retrieve files, users navigate through a hierarchy of keywords assigned to files, selected through pop-up menus. These des-

criptive keywords are pre-assigned to files using File Clerk. The file
selection list shrinks as more keywords are chosen in a search. This
list can be filtered by creator, volume and creation/modification date
as well. Once found, the file, whether text, graphics, sound or video,
can be previewed or launched. Suggested list will be under $100. For
more information, call 619/481-1477.

   ColorScript Laser1000 - QMS is shipping a $12,499 color laser prin-
ter, and claiming a price that is half that of competing products. It
features four-color 300dpi laser printing, color matching capabilities
and PostScript Level 2 emulation. It prints 24-bit-color images as
halftones, instead of as continuous-tone color images, with a printing
speed of two to eight pages per minute. Sixty-five resident typefaces
and 12MB of RAM are standard. Mobile, Ala.-based QMS can be reached at
800/523-2696 or 215/633-4300.

   This PowerBook 145 package, distributed through such channels as Cir-
cuit City, Montgomery Ward, Best Buy, Staples, and Officemax, combines a
4/80 PowerBook 145B with an internal Global Village Powerport Bronze
send/receive fax/modem and a software bundle. The software includes
Touchbase Pro, Datebook Pro, Macintosh PC Exchange, AppleLink, and Zterm
terminal emulation software. Prices in the retail outlets are expected
to be between $1,549 and $1,699. For info, call Apple at 800/776-2333.

   Americans in Space - This new CD-ROM turns your Mac into Mission Con-
trol for American space flights, allowing you to view crew photos, hear
audio clips, and watch video or animation of the American space program.
It includes over sixty minutes of video clips, including the last launch
of the shuttle Challenger, and more than 90 minutes of narration. There
are also nearly 600 images, including crew and mission photos and
artists' renditions of the space station Freedom. Suggested retail price
is $69.95. For more info, call 206/622-5530.

   New Adobe Typefaces - Twenty-eight new Adobe typefaces include
designs from type foundries such as ITC, Monotype and Berthold, bringing
the total number of typeface packages in the Adobe Type Library to over
360. Adobe has also announced the new Sanvito and Caflisch Script
multiple-master typefaces for the Macintosh. Multiple-master faces allow
users to modify many characteristics of the typefaces to suit their
preferences. Through December 31, Sanvito and Caflisch Script and the
other multiple-master typeface packages are available for $89 through
Font & Function, Adobe's recently updated type catalog. After December
31, Sanvito and Caflisch Script will be available for $185 and $95
respectively. For more info, call 415/961-4400.

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> VIDEO FUNCTIONALITY STR InfoFile "PC video processing in a single chip.
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                 VxP500 Video Record and Playback Processor
                 ==

**** New Product Announcement ****

At Comdex this year, AuraVision unveiled the VxP500 Video Record and Playback Processor, a product that incorporates far-reaching PC video processing functionality in a single chip.

Also at the show, Creative Labs, Dolch Computers, Diamond Computer Systems, and a dozen other vendors have introduced the first PC video boards to be based on AuraVision's new integrated circuit (IC).

Microsoft, Adobe, Asymetrix, Xing Technologies, Mathematics, Canyon, and Lenel have announced software support for the chip. SGS-Thomson, C-Cube, and Zoran have also hopped aboard the AuraVision bandwagon, developing reference designs for building complete PC compression systems with the VxP500.

The new VxP500 supplies all the capabilities of a traditional board-level video processor and more, explained Steve Chan, president and founder of AuraVision.

The chip is equipped with hardware acceleration capabilities that allow full-motion (30-frame-per-second) video to be displayed at full-screen resolution without the usual visual degradation, said Mark Hopper, sales director for the Fremont-CA-based startup company. The product also features a unique time scaling feature that eliminates the "jerkiness" of motion common to other systems, he maintained.

Although separate audio hardware is still needed, the VxP500 allows simultaneous capture of video and audio in real time, added Tommy Lee, senior applications manager. In contrast, other processors require video and audio to be captured in different sessions.

Also unlike competing video processing systems, the VxP500 supports color keying as well as chroma keying, according to Lee. Color keying refers to overlaying graphics on top of video, while chroma keying refers to overlaying video on top of graphics.

By integrating all video processing into a single IC, the VxP500 supplies cost savings to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) that will in turn be passed on to end users, Lee said.

The price of the VxP500 to OEMs is less than $100, and boards based on the chips will sell to end users for as low as $300, he estimated. "In comparison, (other) boards now on the market cost $400 or more, and the quality of their output isn't nearly as high," he asserted.

The VxP500 can capture video in RGB, Palettized VGA, YUV, and YUV com-pressed formats under Microsoft Video for Windows, and in RGB, YUV, and Palettized VGA formats under AVI. Support is provided for all AVI video codecs, including JPEG, MPEG, Indeo, Cinepak, and Captain Crunch.

The VxP500 also supports VGA, NTSC, and PAL input, and VGA, NTSC, and Control/L (LANC) videotape output. NTSC support is available for both the composite video and S-Video formats. The chip permits display of up to 16 million colors at up to 1024-by-786 resolution, he said.

AuraVision's hardware zoom technique allows the picture to be expanded without graininess, he explained. The use of vertical interpolation reduces "motion artifacts," or ghosts, and also promotes more realistic colors.

Video for Windows software, available to OEMs for bundling with VxP500-based boards, makes it possible to capture audio from a separate sound board into a .wav file and to combine the video and audio in an interleaved format for synchronized playback, he said.

The chip's time scaling feature comes into play when a system lacks sufficient bandwidth to store 30-frame-per-second video, according to Lee. Video processing systems deal with this situation by dropping some of the frames. Time scaling is designed to drop frames in a smooth and even way.

In a press conference at Comdex, Orchid Technologies rolled out a whole family of VxP500-based boards, including the Vidiola Pro/D full digital video editing; the Vidiola Pro/C for "cuts only" video editing without hard disk video storage; and the Vidiola Premium, a daughter board supplying MJPEG (motion JPEG) compression and decompression.

Aside from Orchid, Creative Labs, Dolch, and Diamond, other OEMs announcing VxP500-based boards at Comdex included U-Max Data Systems, Micro Star, Hauppauge Computer Works, CEI, GVC Technologies, VisionEx, Micro Star, ASCO Corp., Leadtech Research, Lung HWA Corp., and Resonant Research.

In addition to Microsoft's Video for Windows, the following third-party software is available to OEMs for bundling with the boards: Premier for Windows and Photoshop from Adobe; Compel and MediaBlitz! from Asymetrix; Lenel's Multimedia Manager; Xing Technology's Picture Prowler and MPEG Prowler; Mathematica's Tempra Pro authoring package; and ICap video capture software from Canyon.

The VxP500 is the first product to be released by AuraVision, a company established by Chan in July 1992. Chan had previously served as corporate VP and general manager at Chips & Technologies, VP of engineering for Headland Technology, VP of ASIC design for LSI Logic, and staff engineer at Ampex Corp.

> SONIC BOOM! STR InfoFile   Diamond's NEW Sonic Sound Card
  """""""""""""""""""""""""

                          SONIC "BOOM"
                          ============

by R.F. Mariano

     Almost immediately following Comdex, STReport received the Diamond Sonic Sound Card. The card is very well made, MADE in the USA and I might add.. quite interesting. So much so, that we shall take at least three articles to cover the Sonic Sound Card and then... on to other Diamond Computer Corp. products.

Diamond Computers has been the fastest growing, most dynamic to hit the computing scene in recent years. The reason IMHO, is simple. They are producing the products consumers want. They are not producing product they "think" the consumer wants or needs. Nor, are they laying out a product line that'll engender continued purchases to allow the consumer to remain simply contemporary. Diamond is, in fact, actually producing satisfaction. That.. in my opinion is their most serious product. And I might add.. they're good at it.

Now, to the sound card. I've affectionately nicknamed the card;

                    "THE SONIC BOOM!"

I did so for a number of reasons, first of which is obvious.. it sounds great. As a basis for saying this, it must be pointed out it is running on a 20 watt Radio Shack stereo amp that's powering a pair of Bose speakers at the moment. This was done intentionally. We wanted to see the performance on a typical setup as opposed to an optimized installation. Mind you now, there is a Marshall and a pair of Altecs with University Horns destined to be setup on this card also. Its performance so far... is amazingly good. I say that because of my experience with other sound cards... and other computer platforms. (From a previous life)

The installation of the card was easy! I popped the top of the cabinet, plugged the card in, booted the installation software and I was done. To be fair, I should tell you a little about the machine its running in. Its really a very basic 486/50 with 16mb of ram. The machine is a true 50 not a doubler. Now comes what I feel is the very best ancillary benefit the Diamond Sonic Card offers... it eats no memory.. there are no drivers to load. All the previous cards we've seen had drivers to load into memory either high or low.. perhaps a combination of both. The Sonic does none of this.

Sonic Sound is the "Cream of the Crop" when it comes to Multimedia, Midi, Wave and sound manipulations of all types that we were able to do. It has the ultimate in sound technology, the DSP.. Digital Sound Processing. Sonic Sound provides superb music synthesis, terrific digital audio recording and playback. Its sixteen bit CD quality audio output puts the Sonic Sound Card in a superior class by itself. Speaking of performance, a good friend came by to visit and I demo'ed the system's sound to him.. (he's part of a well known rock group based here in Jacksonville), upon hearing the performance and the range of voices it had available, he said to me I see you finally got a Turtle Beach... When I told him it was the Sonic Sound Card from Diamond, he was surprised. This Sound Card is a performer in every sense of the word.

On to the specifications;

WAVE SAMPLE WITH DSP
----
                    32 simultaneous voices
                  0.5mb Wave Sample Standard
                    General MIDI Compliant
              Digital Sound Processor TMS320 C25
              Upgradable to 1.0mb "Enhanced" Midi

```
16 BIT CD QUALITY PLAYBACK & RECORD
-----------------------------------
     Provides  mono and stereo playback  and record at 11.025Khz, 22.05Khz
and 44.1Khz sampling rates in either 8 bit or 16 bit.

                        Plays Standard WAV Files
                      Mixer with three Stereo Channels
                          256 Volume Settings
                              16bit CODEC
                        20 to 16 Khz +0, -3db
                          -70db (max) Noise
                        THD 0.5% max distortion
                        Low Noise Shielding



SOUND BLASTER & ADLIB SUPPORT
-----------------------------
     100% register  level  compatible with  Sound  Blaster and  Adlib  for
maximum entertainment and game software compatibility.
                        Most Games Supported
                     Advanced NEW Midi Sound Standards
                Standard PC Joystick Port (15 pin) included.



SCSI/CD-ROM Interface
---------------------
     Full featured SCSI-2 Interface is  provided on board, which  is fully
compatible  with most  popular  CD-ROM Drives.    High Data  Transfer Rate
supports single/multi-session Kodak Photo CD and  double speed performance
drives.  (Requires optional SCSI Cable Kit)
                Fast 300kb per second +/-3% transfer rate
                        Standard 50 pin connector
                     Compatible with CD-XA ROM Standard
                Drivers available for Windows 3.1, NT, and OS/2
                Support available for internal/external CD-ROM drives.



MIDI Interface
--------------
     Register compatible with the UART and Roland MPU-401 MIDI.



On-Board Connections
--------------------
                        Line Output (1V RMS 1/8" Stereo)
                    External Line-In (1V RMS 1/8" Stereo)
                     Microphone Input (20mV 1/8" Stereo)
                        CD Line-in (1V RMS On-board)
                          SCSI 50 Pin Standard
                     15 Pin MIDI/Joystick Connector



PROFESSIONAL UPGRADE OPTION
---------------------------
                     Enhanced MIDI Sound in 1mb ROM
   Speech Recognition features up to 125 word, user defined, vocabulary
              with auto-adaption to recognize multiple users.
                "Listener" software for voice macros included
                          Headset with Microphone
```

BUNDLED SOFTWARE

MACROMEDIA ACTION!

     Powerful Windows Based multimedia presentation package that can
incorporate digital audio WAV, MIDI, CD audio, AVI and Indeo files.
Sample templates are available.

ANIMATION MUSIC RACK

     Intuitive Stereo like interface that controls MIDI, WAV and CD-audio
under Windows. Comes with an integrated mixer to control external and
auxiliary line-in, microphone and master volume.

MIDISOFT RECORDING SESSION

     Windows based Notational Sequencer that can be used to record, edit,
compose and play music using the on-board stereo synthesizer or other
MIDI devices. Twenty sample MIDI files are included.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

                  IBM AT Compatible including all 386/486s
                              16bit slot
                          640KB RAM minimum
                          DOS 3.1 or higher
                   EGA or VGA Display (VGA recommended)
                          2mb memory or higher
                  Windows 3.1 or 3.0 w/ multimedia extensions
                  Headphones, Amplified Speakers or sound system

WARRANTY

     This product is backed by a two (2) year parts and labor warranty
and is designed, manufactured and tested in the USA.

     Ok, so now you have the specs and lurid details. This card is very
impressive. The bottom line is simple but most eloquent. The Sonic
Sound Card by Diamond sounds GREAT! That really "sez" it all. Since
I've heard the others that are competitively priced, I feel I am in a
position to say I prefer the performance of this card.

     It was a real pleasure to see a "sound professional" (my visitor)
recognize this card as a "powerhouse". As we talked about its potential,
he was showing more and more interest in the card and how it would
benefit the group. We are making plans to run the card with some of his
applications and hardware in the next few days. Stay tuned.

     Next week, we'll delve into the speech recognition features and what
it can do.

for more information;
                  Diamond Computer Systems Inc.
                      1130 East Arques Ave.
                       Sunnyvale, CA. 94086
                  1-408-736-2000 Ask for ext. 204, Dept. STR

                        IBM Audiovation Adapter
                        =======================

**** New Product Announcement ****

   The IBM PC Company Monday announced two powerful sound card adapters
designed to provide users with a key speech recognition application and
high quality digitally sampled MPC Level 2 sound that will enhance any
game. The IBM Audiovation Adapter(a) and Audiovation Adapter/A(a) employ
a Mwave-based Digital Signal Processor(DSP)(a) that satisfies all audio
needs. The twin offerings are being recognized as the next step in brin-
ging multimedia capabilities to the desktop.

   "Because these adapters contain a programmable DSP, they can be easi-
ly expanded with quick, cost-effective software upgrades as opposed to
costly hardware modifications," said Steven L. Starkey, brand manager of
IBM PC Company's Features and Options unit. "No add-on cards are

needed."

   IBM said it intends to provide support for Multimedia Program Manager
/2(MMPM/2), WIN/OS2(a) and CD-XA audio. Audiovation Adapters are offered
with key business applications such as:

   o A speech recognition program, Talk-To-Plus(b), that provides an
alternative to mouse or keyboard input. Users of Microsoft(b) Windows(b)
3.1 can navigate the graphical user interface with spoken commands, such
as "File Save" and "Font Bold."

   o A text-to-speech application, Monologue,(b) that translates written
text into spoken words for various applications. A user can take a spre-
adsheet, for example, and have the numbers read back to him.

   IBM also announced Monday the Audiovation Multimedia Upgrade Kit(a),
which includes the Audiovation ISA sound card and the IBM internal CD-
Rom player. It comes equipped with a microphone and quality Koss powered
speakers. The kit can be used in business, home or educational environ-
ments. Included are such popular interactive titles as Compton's(b)
Interactive Encyclopedia(b), 1993 edition and Battle Chess,(b) along
with a KODAK(b) Photo CD sampler. The IBM Audiovation Adapter is
compatible with industry standard architecture(ISA) and contains a
built-in interface for the IBM IDE internal CD-ROM player. The IBM
Audiovation Adapter/A is compatible with Micro Channel(a) architecture.

   The IBM Audiovation Adapters support applications written for the IBM
M-Audio Capture and Playback adapter, if the applications are written to

the device driver interface. The adapters operate in a Windows 3.1 environment with the MCI-MPC-2(b) audio drivers offering wavefile record and playback at sampling rates up to 44.1KHz in 8- and 16-bit mono and stereo. Users also can record and play 44.1KHz CD audio in 16-bit stereo and even mix CD sound with wavefile playback.

Offered separate from the adapters, a Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) synthesizer uses sampled sound synthesis to provide accurate musical instrument sound reproduction. The Audiovation MIDI Pac enables customers to play, edit and record music through the MIDI interface. Included in the MIDI Pac are two applications, Band-in-a-Box(b) for Windows and Powertraks(b).

The Mwave DSP also supports applications that employ Qsound,(b) which gives the Mwave MIDI synthesizer incredible three-dimensional effects on ordinary stereo speakers. The system provides real-time 4:1 sound data compression to greatly reduce storage requirements without sacrificing fidelity. The Audiovation Adapters will also run most games written for Sound Blaster.(b) The Audiovation Adapters provide jacks to connect headphones, speakers, microphone and an external audio source. A joystick port is also provided.

The adapters are available now through the PCC DRM Catalog phone number, 1-800-IBM-2YOU. The Audiovation Adapter ISA version is priced at $219, the Audiovation Adapter/A Micro Channel 1 at $259, the MIDI kit at $79, and the multimedia upgrade kit at $599.

> Sound Cards STR InfoFile
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                        SOUND CARDS FOR THE PC
                        ======================

by Philip Moore
Ctsy CIS

    You've all heard the hype and seen the ads. You know a sound card can add spectacular sounds and music to your games, Multimedia efforts, or even to Windows. But which one is best for you?

    Installing a sound card in your PC has become almost as commonplace as owning a VGA video card. It won't be long before they are bundled with all new PC's as a matter of course. If you are in the market for a sound card though it can be confusing deciding which to buy - there are just so many about now and they all seem to have features others lack.

    This round up of sound cards attempts to help you make that choice.

Adlib

     It's unlikely you will find the Adlib being sold any more, but I
include it for historical reference. The Adlib was the first sound card
on the PC and introduced the almost universal standard of FM synthesis.
It was mono, had no digital audio capabilities, and took the PC games
world by storm.

     Since its release Adlib have been rather slack in developing the
card further and were overtaken by rival compatible cards - notably the
SoundBlaster.

     The Adlib Gold card was set to change all that, but just as it was
to be released the company went bankrupt. They have since been rescued
and the Adlib Gold is available in limited quantities in the US, Canada
and parts of Europe, but their Australian distributors have no plans to
import it here.

SoundBlaster

     This is the one everyone knows about - due more to sharp marketing
and continued development than anything else.

     The original SoundBlaster was basically an Adlib clone offering Mono
FM synthesis, with the added bonus of digital audio - also mono only.

     Games quickly saw the advantages of the digital audio section and
their support has helped make it and its descendant models the most
popular sound card in the world.

     There have been several confusing versions of the SoundBlaster
released over the years, each with subtle technical differences. I will
confine myself to the most current, which come as complete kits of a
sound card and software bundle.

SoundBlaster (Deluxe)

   The SoundBlaster(Deluxe) is actually the original SoundBlaster card
(V.2) repackaged. A very straightforward card for the budget conscious.
It uses the same mono FM synthesis chips for music as the original Adlib,
offering up to 11 simultaneous voices (this means you can have as many as
11 notes playing at once, and it doesn't matter what instrument sound is
playing any of these notes).

     The Digital Audio is minimalist compared to some of the higher end
cards, but perfectly adequate for games. It will record wave audio in 8
bit from only 4 to 15 Khz sample rate in mono. Play back can handle
sample rates up to 44Khz (8 bit, mono).

     Bundled with the card comes a suite of software. In the Windows
domain you get Creative Wave Studio, a Wave editor replacing the original
VEDIT of earlier versions. This is a good program, with some effects
like Reverse and Echo, though the lack of an Undo function limits it.

     You also get Soundo'LE, a recorder which is not much different to
the Sound Recorder already in Windows; Mosaic, a puzzle game with Sound
effects; JukeBox for playing MIDI files; Talking Scheduler, an
interesting diary-like application with appointments being announced
verbally to you by a choice of characters; and Monologue, a text to

speech converter which allows you to highlight text and have it read out
to you through the sound card in an almost human voice. You can also
define phonetic pronunciation for individual words using the dictionary
utility - very clever.

      Some people complained about the lack of Windows software with
earlier releases. That has certainly been addressed. One could argue as
to the usefulness of some of it, but no denying there's plenty of it.

      For DOS users there is the FM Intelligent Organ, a DOS jukebox for
music files; SBTalker, a command line text to speech converter, great for
use in batch files; Dr Sbaitso, a kind of talking on-line psychiatrist;

and the ever popular Talking Parrot, which mimics what you say into the
microphone and laughs if you touch the keyboard. All interesting stuff
in a gimmicky sort of way.

      As well there is a range of DOS utilities for converting between
Creative Labs VOC format files and WAV files; command line players for
both CMF and MIDI music files; and MMPlay, a multimedia script player
that allows you to combine sound files with Autodesk Animator Pro FLI
files.

      If you just want a sound card that will work fine with most games,
and gives plenty of bundled software to play around with, then the Deluxe
version of the SoundBlaster is a good buy.

SoundBlaster Pro

      This was released over two years ago now and was seen as a major
improvement over the original SB. The FM synthesis was made stereo, and
the Digital Audio recording now goes as high as 44.1 Khz in 8 bit mono,
or 22.05Khz/8 bit stereo. (There are in fact three versions of the SB
Pro, the most current being V.2. Be sure this is the one you get as the
quality of the FM music is potentially much better due to a different
chipset - the 4 operator OPL3 - being used).

      For some games the SB Pro will make a marked difference in the sound
quality, offering full stereo music and effects. The FM synthesizer is
now capable of 20 voice polyphony in stereo. For Windows Multimedia the
SB Pro is also a more viable choice as it comes with a CD-ROM interface.
This until recently used the Matsushita/Panasonic standard and as such
would only work with the CD-ROM supplied by Creative Labs. These drives
are good, but there are certainly faster ones around. You can now also
get the SB Pro with a SCSI or Sony 31A CD-ROM interface. As a rule SCSI
is the best way to go as it will work with any SCSI drive and operate at
faster speeds.

      The card has sockets for Line-in, Microphone in, and Line-out. You
can also buy separately a MIDI breakout box that connects to the joystick
port and which allows you to attach a MIDI keyboard to the SoundBlaster
for MIDI recording.

      The supplied software is identical to the Deluxe, with a couple of
additions. HSC Interactive is a Windows multimedia authoring package.
It is very well presented and easy to use. You just place icons on the
page in a tree-like structure to create a linear presentation. You can
play WAV, MIDI and CD-Audio files using standard Windows MCI commands,
and visuals can be handled by Microsoft Video clips or ANI animations.

The only real drawback I found was that it does not import
Animations from any package apart from its own proprietary one. Autodesk
FLI and FLC files are considered a standard for this sort of work these
days and should be included.

Also there is a CD-ROM disk of Software Toolworks' Encyclopedia.
This is whether you buy a CD-ROM or not and is meant as an inducement to
get one. I can vouch for it as an excellent reference tool.

For gamers and multimedia developers the SoundBlaster Pro is an good
choice also. There is also a Microchannel version available for those
with an IBM PS/2 machine.

SoundBlaster 16 & WaveBlaster

   The latest offering from Creative Labs is the SB-16 and much has been
made of its 16 bit capabilities. This refers to the fact that the
Digital Audio section of the card can now sample and play back WAV files
at 16 bit as well as 8 bit resolution, at sample rates up to 44.1Khz in
stereo. This is CD quality and very professional for what is still
essentially a domestic market card.

There are actually two versions of this card - the SB-16 and the
SB-16 ASP. The ASP stands for Advanced Signal Processing, which comes in
the form of an additional chip on the card to handle some of the Digital
processing. Part of this is the use of DMA (Direct Memory Access) to
process the incredible amount of data in 16 bit sound files.

The digital audio in the SB-16 is excellent, though it must be said
that if you are only interested in playing games, no game in the near
future is likely to support 16 bit sound - except perhaps some CD-ROM
titles. If however you intend making your own quality recordings, or
recording from audio CD's from the CD-ROM drive, 16 bit sound is the way
to go.

As far as the FM synthesizer goes it is no different to the SB Pro.
Good, but still FM. In an attempt to upgrade the card while maintaining
downward compatibility, Creative Labs have added an option for a daughter
board called the Wave Blaster, which uses an industry standard MPU-401
MIDI interface.

The Wave Blaster is a complete extra sound card that just clips on
to the SB-16. It is in fact an Emu Proteus/1XR synthesizer on a card and
conforms to General MIDI. The Proteus, though old technology in
professional music circles, nonetheless provides far superior sounds to
the FM of earlier cards as it uses samples of real instruments - so a
piano will actually sound like a piano.

With a WaveBlaster board attached you will have two separate sound
devices to choose from. Under Windows there are two drivers in the
control panel (FM and MIDI), and most DOS games should work with the
WaveBlaster if you select either MT-32 or General MIDI options (though
you may not get the correct instrument sounds). Creative Labs have since
bought out Emu Systems, so expect to see more SoundBlaster products using
this technology.

Software-wise the SB 16's come with exactly the same suite of
applications as their lesser brothers, plus: PC Animate, the animation

program that accompanies HSC Interactive; and Voice Assist, a Speech
recognition program for Windows. This allows you to verbally give your
computer commands via a microphone and have it respond automatically -
'look ma, no hands!' And we thought this sort of technology was years
away yet.

     Like the SB Pro there is a CD-ROM interface, for now only the
Panasonic/Matsushita type - but it works fine, and the MIDI Kit can be
bought separately to attach a MIDI keyboard to the SB16.

     Supplied with the WaveBlaster daughter board is a control panel for
creating your own banks of patches and altering the card's settings.
This is handy for those who intend using it as a MIDI music device and
you can save as many of these setups to disk as you like (some banks,
including MT-32, are supplied). The only problem with it is there is no
way of auditioning a sound, so you can't actually hear what you are
doing.

     Also included is Cakewalk Apprentice, a cut-down version of Cakewalk
Pro for Windows, one of the best MIDI sequencers on the market. This
Apprentice version lacks some features like SMPTE sync control and
multiple MIDI ports but it is nonetheless an excellent entry level
sequencer.

     With the SB16 coming it at $399 and the SB16 ASP at $499 you have to
consider whether you really need this much sound card. Sixteen bit audio
is the wave of the future, but unless you are into serious multimedia or
want to dabble with CD quality digital audio you won't notice much
difference. With the addition of the Wave Blaster daughter board at $299
though, this adds a quality General MIDI synth to give much better MIDI
music - for games and Multimedia alike.

SoundBlaster range distributed by ComputaMart: (02)906 8887

MEDIA VISION

Pro Audio Spectrum 16 &
Pro Audio Studio 16

     The range of sound cards from Media Vision are not all that
different to the SoundBlasters, and as such much of what I have said
about the SB range applies to these. They deserve their own special
place in this feature however since they have come to represent a major
competitor for quality sound cards.

     The first Media Vision card was the Thunderboard, which to all
intents and purposes was the same as a SoundBlaster Basic. Then came the
Pro Audio Spectrum (comparable to the SB Pro).

     Neither of these cards are readily available any more. The latest
in the range is the Pro Audio Spectrum 16, which, as you may have

guessed, is comparable to the SB-16. It uses the same OPL3 FM chips,
providing up to 20 voices for Music; and offers 16 bit Digital Audio at
sample rates from 11.025 to 44.1Khz in stereo - CD quality. They are
SoundBlaster compatible, but only in mono.

There are actually two different versions of this card - the Pro
Audio Spectrum 16 ($359), and the Pro Audio Studio 16 ($465). The cards
themselves are virtually identical, the only difference is in the bundled
software.

        With the Pro Audio Spectrum 16 you get TrakBlaster Pro, an excellent
MOD file player and recorder for DOS. Not to be confused with MIDI
files, MODs began life on the Amiga and are like 4 track sequenced songs
that use digital samples for their instruments and play on the Digital
Audio section of the sound card.   There is also a DOS MIDI sequencer,
digital recorder, mixer control, and the ubiquitous Monologue for
Windows.

        With the Pro Audio Studio 16 you get all of the above, plus a CD
Audio player for Windows; MidiSoft's Recording Session for Windows for a
MIDI sequencer (and a good one it is, too); ExecuVoice, a voice
recognition program with a neat little clip on microphone; and the superb
Sound Impressions - a complete suite of multimedia tools.

        Sound Impressions looks like a standard hi-fi rack and includes a
MIDI file player, CD Audio player, Digital Recorder and Mixer. The
Digital Editor with this program is the best I have seen in a sound card
bundle. It allows you to add effects like Flange, Chorus and Echo,
resample, noise filter, reverse, and more. It is fast, stable, and a joy
to use.

        The Pro Audio cards are shielded to reduce RF interference and use
16 bit DMA for digital processing. As a result the sound quality is
excellent. They also come with a SCSI CD-ROM interface and a MIDI
breakout box called the MIDI Mate can be bought separately. The only
drawback on such a well specified card is that it is still using FM
synthesis for MIDI.

Pro Audio Spectrum range distributed by Chips & Bits (03) 696 5955

LazerWave

   Just to muddy the waters even more, the Media Vision range of cards
are also available under a different name and are distributed by a
different company - ACS.

        In this range is the LaserWave Classic - same as the original
Thunderboard - but with an added CD-ROM Interface. Bundled software is
Thunder Master, a wave editor. This retails for $265.

        Next in line is the Lazerwave 16, identical to the Pro Audio
Spectrum 16, except there is less bundled software. With this you get
Stereo Studio F/X, a digital wave editor; a mixer panel; Pro Speech, a
text to speech application similar to Monologue; as well as Windows
driver and sample wave and MIDI files. Retail price is $445.

        A new card in the range is the Supra 16 which offers, in effect, a
LazerWave 16 and Microsoft Sound System on the one card. It includes
support for 8 bit file compression and is still compatible with
Adlib/Soundblaster. Bundled software includes Windat for wave recording
and editing; AudioStation, a hi-fi style player; Monologue For Windows;
Dragon Talk, a voice recognition program; and of course Windows and DOS
drivers. This sells for $465.

All in all a well rounded group of sound cards. And if you need MS
Sound System compatibility the Supra gives you the best of both worlds.

LaserWave range distributed by ACS (03) 335 4100

Sound Galaxy

     This is another range of sound cards that have taken their lead from
the SB/Adlib cards. There are four in the range currently available, the
Sound Galaxy BX at $169 (comparable to the SB Deluxe); the NX Pro at $299
(comparable to the SB Pro V.2); and the NX Pro 16 at $499 (you guessed
it, comparable to the SB 16).   All of these are Adlib/SoundBlaster
compatible, as well as Covox Speech Thing and Disney Sound Source (two
far less common standards).

     Bundled software is also comparable to the SoundBlaster range in
many respects. The Sound Galaxy BX comes with two digital sound editors
- Windat and Galaxy Master; a Windows Jukebox; diagnostic utilities and
Windows driver; A Multimedia scripter for DOS and demo songs. It also
provides speakers, though not terribly good ones.

     The NX Pro also offers HSC Interactive; Monologue for Windows; a
hi-fi style control panel for CD-Audio and Wave files, and a CD Audio
player. A choice of the three main types of AT CD-ROM interfaces as well
an optional SCSI CD-ROM interface upgrade.

     The NX Pro 16 supports all the standards mentioned above as well as
the more recent Microsoft Sound System. A microphone and headphones are
provided and the software included is the same as the NX Pro. It also
has the same choice of CD-ROM interfaces as the NX Pro.

     A wavetable daughterboard called the Wave Power can be bought (just
like the SB 16's WaveBlaster) to give much betters quality MIDI music.
This uses the same Ensoniq EPS synth as that found on the AudioMaster
(see later) and is fully MPC and General MIDI compliant. Bundled with it
Midisoft Studio for Windows, another decent entry level sequencer.

     The fourth offering from Sound Galaxy is the new Business Audio
Board (let's call it BABS) at $367. This is fundamentally the same as
the NX Pro 16 mentioned above, with the same suite of software exactly
(which makes it no less desirable), and the same technical specifications
(16 bit, CD-ROM interface and so on).

     The most noticeable difference to the average user is that it does
not include the Covox Speech Thingy and Disney Sound Source support
(which is no great loss), or more importantly - SoundBlaster
compatibility. It is designed as an alternative to the Microsoft Sound
System under Windows only, so this is not the card to get if you are into
games.

     One good point of the Business Audio Board is that since it has been
designed primarily for use under Windows 3.1 it does not limit itself to
the standard IRQ and Port Address settings, using IRQ 10 and Address 530
by default. This means that there should be no problem installing BABs
alongside another sound card if you so desire, which you would need to do
if you still intend to use DOS applications.

     Sound Galaxy is proving to be the 'up and comer' in the sound card
market. Its products are as good as, and in some respects better than,

the competition they set out to emulate thanks to such things as software
control of the card's settings rather than jumper pins.

The SOund Galaxy range is distributed by Total Peripherals, (03) 646
7011, fax (03) 646 7207.

There are other FM based sound cards not mentioned here, but they
are essentially the same as those discussed. I have compared most of the
above cards against the SOundBlaster range to avoid repeating myself they
all have so much in common, and indeed some come from the same
manufacturers.

Technically these cards are all essentially the same. They use the
same FM synthesizer chips to produce music and digital audio is a well
established process now. Incompatibilities arise because each must find
their own solution to the same problems to avoid breaching one another's
patents and copyrights, and because of this you get the mess of standards
we have now. Sound Blaster, at least, is seen by one and all as the
leader in this area and its name carries weight on any sound card box.

OmniLabs

The AudioMaster from OmniLabs is one of the big boys of sound cards.
It's a full-length card with a professional quality synth on board, as
well as offering high quality digital audio, it does come with a snap on
daughterboard for Soundblaster compatibility The MIDI section of the
card uses a process known as wavetable look-up to produce its sounds.
Put simply, the card stores recordings of real instruments as a digital
sample - a waveform - rather than trying to synthesis something that
'sounds like' the real thing as FM does. These waveforms can then be
played using MIDI.

What it comes down to, as far as most people are concerned, is more
realistic music. The Audiomaster uses the same chip set as the Ensoniq
EPS, a professional musician's instrument.

The card's sounds are kept as patch files on your hard disk and
dumped into the card's onboard RAM as you start up your software. THis
causes a delay of only a few seconds and the advantages of this far
outweigh any inconvenience.

AudioMaster conforms to the WIndows Multimedia Standard playing up
to 24 notes simultaneously, and using General MIDI patch mapping with 128
instrument sounds. Aa 15-pin D-Shell port is included for attaching
either a joystick or a MIDI breakout box which can be bought separately.
It also offers connections for a CD-ROM interface, with the option of
choosing which interface type you prefer.

The digital recording section of the card has its own microprocessor
and noise filtering circuitry. It will record from either microphone (an
excellent one is supplied with the card) or Line-in at 11.025, 22.5, or
44.1KHz sampling rate in mono, in 16 bits (playback can be either mono or
stereo). The quality of the digital audio recording is excellent, though
mono input only may be a limitation for some.

This card offers the kind of versatility well-heeled professionals
have been used to for a long time in much more expensive hardware.
because all the instrument sounds are stored on disk, it should be
possible to record original samples to use in the MIDI section of the

card. Indeed, the AudioMaster has ben designed for this purpose.
Unfortunately no software editor is available yet to do this, and while
promised it has been a long time coming.

    Much of the bundled software comes from Voyetra, who seem to have
cornered the market on MIDI software support for sound cards. There is
Sequencer Plus Junior; the DOS version of Band-In-A-Box, a great MIDI
accompaniment program; Monologue; two music tutorial programs, Note Play
and Rhythm Play; command-line MIDI and digital file players; a decent DOS
multimedia scripting program, SoundScript; as well as jukeboxes, mixers,
CD-ROM control panels and digital recording programs for both DOS and
Windows.

    The card's MIDI interface however not MPU-401 compatible so another
DOS sequencer won't work with it - in Windows there isn't a problem.
SOund-wise, the MIDI section of the card is far superior to the FM of
those reviewed above.

    At $499, the AudioMaster is one of the best value cards on the
market. With the FM daughterboard you can use it for most games, and it
provides good functionality on a card for professional and amateur
musicians alike.

    The AudioMaster is distributed by OmniLabs Australia, (02) 319 2022,
fax (02) 310 1809.

Gravis Ultrasound

    The Ultrasound is a new entry into the filed from Canadian company
Gravis, best known for their high performance joysticks. Like the
Audiomaster, the Ultrasound uses samples of real instrument sounds to
give much more realistic music. TO achieve this it has 32 digital audio
channels - two of these are generally reserved for standard playback of
digital voices and sound effects, while the remaining channels are
devoted to sample playback via MIDI. THis means that the MIDI synth on
the Ultrasound is a true sampler and sample player.

    Yet, the Ultrasound also manages SoundBlaster compatibility even
though it is not an FM card. This it achieves through a TSR driver
called SBOS which, when loaded before a game, gives music and digital
effects, sounding just like any of the FM cards. This may not work on
all games, however.

    Other third party drivers have also recently been developed which
allows the Ultrasound to emulate a Roland MT32, or General MIDI synth
using the MPU standard interface.

    If you are used to an 8-bit/FM sound card then the Ultrasound is
certainly a step up, but for those not technically minded, it can be a
bit of a minefield.

    Like the AudioMaster it uses sampled instruments which are stored on
disk and must be loaded into the card's RAM before it will do anything.
Unlike the Audiomaster, this is not an automatic procedure, and there is
nothing in the manual to tell you what to do. It took me a while to work
out how to get it to make any noise at all with my MIDI sequencer.

    Applications are evenly spread across DOS and Windows with a few
simple play and record utilities, including a well-dressed though cludgy

wave editor (Sound Studio 8) for DOS, and a Patch Manager, Mixer and driver for Windows.

The Patch Manager is for selecting which instrument sounds (patches) are to be loaded into the card before you can play anything. This can be fiddly and you are restricted in how many instruments you can load by the amount of RAM on the card. The UltraSound ships with 256Kb only allowing you load on average five to ten patches. There are over 200 patches on disk providing all the instruments and drums sounds for a General MIDI synth. It is impossible therefore to load the complete set at any one time.

For games using the SBOS driver this doesn't pose a problem, but for Multimedia and MIDI music it is a severe limitation.

The UltraSound is a different kind of sound card though, and shouldn't really be judged on the same terms as others reviewed here. It cannot be said to be MPC compatible as it does not allow full General MIDI support, however, MIDIphiles familiar with musical samplers have been praying for something like the UltraSound for years. It is the first sound card to deliver true musical sampling and it opens up all sorts of possibilities, both for musicians and software developers.

But (there's always a but), while the card can play back samples at up to 44Khz in 16 bit stereo (CD quality) you can only record in 8 bit. For musical applications this again, is inadequate.

If you want to make the most of the UltraSound's sampling for MIDI playback, you need a patch editor that can save in the .PAT format that the card uses, a 16 bit upgrade in the form of a daughter board, and more RAM. This will allow you to record your own sounds and then use these as instruments in the card.

The 16 bit upgrade is available for an extra $99 and a Patch editor (primitive as it is) exist and works now, though it is not yet available to the general public.

The quality of the digital recording at 8 bit is okay, though not brilliant. Sixteen bit playback quality is also not as clean as other 16 bit cards. Again, not really good enough for professional use.

Gravis have chosen to initially release the UltraSound in a basic configuration to keep the cost down. A CD-ROM interface can also be bought as an optional daughter board, as can a MIDI break-out box.

So while the UltraSound is in most regards an good sound card for the price, the limitations imposed on it make it difficult for developers and MIDI musicians to get the most from it. It should have come standard with 1Mb Ram and 16 bit recording. And this is probably what the next version (called The Max due later this year) will be. When this appears on the scene, with the promise of improved software and hardware, there will be no stopping Gravis as the card of choice for many home studios and budget Audio/Visual work.

Gravis UltraSound distributed by PlayCorp (03) 329 2999

Turtle Beach MultiSound

This was the first serious multimedia card available and it still stands as one of the best. The synthesizer section of the card uses a Proteus 1/XR (before Creative Labs bought it for the WaveBlaster). It uses wavetable look-up to produce its sounds, so all the instruments on the card are high quality samples of real instruments.

The MultiSound conforms to the Windows Multimedia standard, using General MIDI patch mapping with 128 instrument sounds and supporting all 16 MIDI channels. It has 4Mb of onboard memory (expandable to 8) for instrument sounds and can play up to 32 notes simultaneously. There is enough memory for 384 preset sounds, and you can swap between General MIDI, Proteus 1/XR or your own original bank.

The Digital Audio section of the card supports all sample rates up to 44.1khz at either 8 or 16 bits in stereo, recording and playback. It also states that this is with 64-times oversampling, a figure other cards don't reveal in their documentation and which guarantees excellent reproduction.

Software provided includes a Proteus front panel for controlling the synth section of the card. This will allow the experienced user to create their own preset sounds and save these settings to disk as defaults. There is also a patch bay for re-routing MIDI data, a Mixer, a record monitor with real VU Meters on screen, and a diagnostic program; as well as some command line DOS utilities for recording and playing Digital Audio files, and the sequencer program Trax for Windows - yet another good entry level sequencer.

The digital editor supplied is a version of Wave for Windows and is perhaps the best program of its kind for serious digital recording, especially for longer pieces as it records direct to disk. With effects like Reverse and Time Compression, and the ability to edit and mix up to four waveforms at once makes it a truly professional tool. Real-time file compression and sample rate conversion is also supported.

Digital Audio is impeccable due to a Motorola 56001 processor on board to handle the heavy processing, with an architecture that claims to move data 8 times faster than any other sound card. I don't doubt it.

At $1,395 the MultiSound is not for the game players and is not SB or MPU-401 compatible, but it is ideally suited to professional musicians and Multimedia developers that want quality sound.

MultiSound distributed by Mainly Multitrac (03) 558 1517

Roland

MT32/LAPC-1

When Roland released the MT-32 sound module they caused an unexpected revolution in computer sound. The card version of this popular module was the LAPC-1. Neither are readily available any more, but like the Adlib I include it here for historical purposes.

They were MIDI synthesizers only, providing no Digital Audio or CD-ROM interface, and no bundled software, but at the time it was a giant leap forward from FM. The same synth can still be found in later modules - the CM32L, CM64, and CM500. But Roland seem to have abandoned the

MT-32 technology in favor of their newer, and far superior, GS range.

Roland SCC-1

      The SCC-1 is a card version of the Sound Canvas module with an MPU
MIDI interface (the industry standard). It provides a stereo headphone
socket, Left & Right Audio outs and 'Mini-DIN' connectors (with adaptor
cables) for MIDI In & Out. There is no bundled software except for a
basic utility program for testing and playing sample songs.

      The Sound Canvas was the first synth module to support both the new
General MIDI and GS standards.   General MIDI defines, among other
things, a standard order for instrument patches - up to 128 of them. The
GS standard offers multiple banks of 128 with potentially 16,384 patches
stored in its memory. The SCC-1 doesn't go this far though, it has
effectively 317. You can also choose between 7 different drums sets,
from Standard through Power and TR-808 (for the rappers) to Orchestra.

      The card is multi-timbral, offering 16 parts - one for each MIDI
channel. All its sound sources are multi-sampled waveforms, producing
some excellent and very 'life-like' results. There is also 8 Reverb and
8 Chorus effects built in which can be controlled with MIDI commands.

      The SCC-1 is 24 note polyphonic (meaning it can play 24 notes at
once), but some voices use a combination of two sound sources, thus
reducing the amount of polyphony possible.

      In terms of Multimedia and music applications the SCC-1 is an
excellent choice for MIDI. It offers better sound, better specs, and
more variety than any other sound card on the market.

      It does not, however, provide Digital Audio capabilities, so you
cannot play WAV or VOC files on it. For this you would still need a
SoundBlaster or similar type of card. Both can be installed quite
happily, and some games even allow you to take advantage of both at once.

      As far as games are concerned, many are now starting to support GS
as a sound option, and those that don't usually support MT32. The SCC-1
has an MT-32 emulation bank which works well - though, depending on the
game, may sound a bit odd.

      As a subjective opinion the SCC-1 is the best sounding MIDI card on
the market at a list price of $795. If bundled software is not
important, but quality sound is - this is the one.

RAP-10

      For those who want the quality MIDI of the SCC-1 as well as 16-bit
digital audio Roland is about to release the RAP-10 giving you the best
of both worlds. It promises excellent quality for both games and
multimedia and will come with an impressive suite of bundled software
aimed primarily at professional users.

      It is difficult to say more since I have only briefly seen a beta
version and have not yet given it a good test run myself. But the
hardware seems to be up to Roland's usual excellent quality, and the
software looks very promising.

For Multimedia developers, MIDI musicians who want Digital Audio
capabilities, and hard-core gamers the RAP-10 is definitely the one to
wait for. Price at this stage is expected to be $1,195.

Roland range distributed by Roland Australia (02) 982 8266

    """

                    :HOW TO GET YOUR OWN GENIE ACCOUNT:
                    _____

         Set your communications software to Half Duplex (or Local Echo)
                    Call: (with modem) 800-638-8369.
                 Upon connection type HHH (RETURN after that).
                         Wait for the U#= prompt.

                 Type: XTX99587,CPUREPT then, hit RETURN.

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                Information Services/GEnie, reprinted by permission

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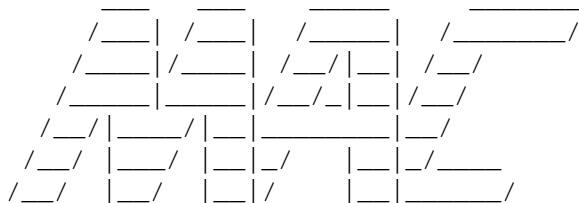
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             An Official Forum of the International Computer Users Group

                    *** STReport available in MAC RT ***
                              ASCII TEXT
                         for ALL GEnie users!

                         MAC/APPLE SECTION (II)
                         ======================
                          Randy Noak, Editor

> From the MAC Editor's Desk
   """""""""""""""""""""""""""

    Well, I'm stuffed! I hope you all had as nice a Thanksgiving as I
did. Time to start thinking about Santa now. My kids are already bugging
me to put the tree up, but I plan on building excitement by holding out
for a week or two. My six year old daughter is busy planning her yearly
"Letter to Santa". Every year, after December 1, most of the online
services accept and answer letters to "Santa Claus". My daughter writes
her letter and together we send it off into cyberspace. Then, we eagerly

wait for a response. A day or two later she has her very own "Letter from Santa" that she prints out and reads, over and over and over and over. It's a lot of fun. If you have children, check out your favorite on-line service for Santa's mailbox.

     As always, there is a lot of action here at Mac Report HQ. Carriers at War arrived this week. Carriers at War is a simulation of Aircraft Carrier warfare in the Pacific during World War II. Various scenarios are provided including the "Pearl Harbor Unsurprised" scenario. Hmmm. At any rate, Jeff Coe will be reviewing this game in a future issue. Adobe Streamline 3.0 arrived this week also. I haven't had too much time to work with this yet, but, so far, it looks neat. Scanning, editing bit-maps, editing vectors, and more are supported. I'll be reviewing this one in the future. The usual pile of mail is waiting, and my "real" job is a bear. Let's get on with this week's column.

_____

> Inline Preview! STR InfoFile
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                    Deliverance from Inline Software
                    =================================

          Here's a little "teaser" from David Maffucci, Inline Software
Tech.

     Inline Software is about to release a new Mac game that (IMHO) is the greatest Mac Adventure/Arcade/Fighting game ever.

*** Look out Sega/Nintendo - here is a description:

     "Many legends have been written describing the heroic battles to preserve the kingdom of Llyn Cerrig, a place of great natural beauty and wonder where Fairies and nymphs happily lived together. One legend relates the story of Tnarom who tried to destroy the beautiful kingdom's harmony by imprisoning the Fairies, the guardian angels of Llyn Cerrig. He received the help of evil forces to conquer the kingdom. A terrible darkness smothered the land. Panic and confusion spread throughout... Each darkened day passed the colony became smaller and smaller - the Fairy-folk was simply vanishing. Eventually all Fairies were captured and imprisoned deep within Tnarom's Palace. Gremlins and Ghouls are still wandering about the dark corridors of Tnarom's Palace to invade the kingdom. As the Stormlord, you have been given the task of locating and freeing the imprisoned Fairies and to bring them back to Llyn Cerrig. Without the Fairy guardians, the kingdom will be at the ultimate mercy of evil.

Once the Fairies have been freed from Tnarom's Palace, you must guide them safely through the Pits of Fire, the Enchanted Forest and the Winged Warriors Filled Skies to the kingdom of Llyn Cerrig.

At the end of every section of your quest, you will face a fearsome Guardian who must be slain for your journey to continue. Each of these has a weak spot where it can be destroyed. It is up to you to identify it.

Sounds neat doesn't it? Look for a Mac Report Review of Deliverance in the next few weeks. Jeff Coe has already called "Dibs!" on this one (How does he do it?), so it should be an informative, interesting review.

_____

> VIRUS ALERT STR FOCUS!
  """""""""""""""""""""""

                VIRUS ALERT ***** VIRUS ALERT ***** VIRUS ALERT
                ==

Two new viruses have reared their ugly heads. Here's the scoop:

CODE-1
This virus infects the System file and applications as they are run and attempts to alter existing program code. Some systems might crash when infected applications are run. When as infected system is booted on October 31 of any year, CODE-1 may rename your hard disk.

MBDF-B
The virus, MBDF-B, infects any resource file when it is opened. Infected Claris applications will indicate that they have been altered, the BeHierarchis shareware program ceases to work correctly, and some

programs will crash if an item in the menu bar is selected with the mouse. MBDF-B is a variant of the MBDF-A virus.

What to do? What to do? First, don't panic. Chances are you'll never see a virus on your system. If you buy only shrink wrapped, new software, and only visit commercial on-line services (where all files are checked for viruses before they are released to the public), there is only a small chance that you'll be infected. If you "borrow" software, use non-commercial BBS's, or buy non-shrink wrapped software, start worrying. In any case, your first defense is an anti-virus program. Shareware and freeware anti-virus programs are available on all commercial on-line servicess and commercial packages are available too. I use MacTools which not only contains an Antivirus control panel, but also is a full-featured disk utility program,. I highly recommend MacTools. One neat thing about MacTools is that the developers, Central Point Software, post virus updates on CompuServe, America OnLine, AppleLink, and the Internet. All you have to do is download the file MAC CPAV Antidotes , open the

self-extracting file and follow instructions. You can then relax and
worry about NAFTA instead of computer viruses. For more info on MacTools,
call Central Point at 1-800-937-9842.

_____

> MAC PRESS REPORTS STR Infofile
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

     There are a lot of things that computers are good for. One of those
things is data retrieval. Retailers have finally figured that out too,
and so we have the first interactive home shopping CD-ROM. Think about
it. While the old Sears catalog was nice, wouldn't it be wonderful to be
able to actually see those clothes on moving models? Wouldn't it be great
to be able to watch power tool demos? Wouldn't it be great to watch a
QuickTime movie showing you how to install that water softener you just
ordered? All this, and more, is possible. This is exciting stuff and this
first step merely scratches the surface of what is possible. I believe
that this is the future of home shopping. Here's the release.

 Major Interactive Home Shopping Pilot Announced by Apple, EDS and
Redgate CUPERTINO, California--November 23, 1993--

     Ushering the digital revolution into the home shopping arena, three
leading information industry companies today announced an interactive
CD-ROM-based pilot program. The pilot -- called En Passant -- involves
Apple Computer, Inc., EDS and Redgate Communications Corporation. En
Passant showcases 21 catalogs from 18 prominent retail companies, and
features expansive editorial content including Dow Jones information on
personal finance. The comprehensive multimedia disk will be distributed
nationwide in early December to approximately 30,000 CD-ROM drive
owners--primarily consumers in the home as well as select business
locations.

     The companies undertook the pilot to test a new concept that
provides a powerful, intelligent and personalized way to shop. En
Passant provides consumers with benefits not available from other home
shopping alternatives. For example, shoppers can easily specify
personal preferences and En Passant will then provide a range of product
and gift suggestions.

     The result is an interactive CD-ROM that consumers can browse as a
collection of catalogs, customize to meet personal preferences or even
use as a lifestyle magazine. All products on the CD-ROM can be ordered
with a single phone call.

     "Apple has aggressively grown the multimedia industry by shipping
more than one million CD-ROM drives in this year alone," commented Ian
Diery, executive vice president of Apple's Personal Computer division.
"We are now ready to build new consumer businesses targeted to this
audience. With the combined strengths of Apple, EDS and Redgate, we
hope to use this pilot to define an entirely new distribution vehicle
for the retail industry."

 More than 20 Catalogs Featured

In one easy-to-use disk, En Passant features brand-name merchandise from such leading companies as Lands' End, Williams-Sonoma, Tiffany & Co., The Horchow Collection, Pastilles, LL Bean, The Nature Company, 800-FLOWERS, Biobottoms, Biordi Art Imports, The Apple Catalog, Hanna Andersson, Patagonia, Inc., Pottery Barn, Right Start Catalog, SelfCare Catalog and Winter Silks, among others.

Several catalogs have been enhanced to include features such as fashion coordination which shows users the best clothing combinations, on-screen color changing so consumers can see how an item appears in the different color choices, as well as video and audio product descriptions. Consumers can also create an order list of products they are considering buying as they browse through the disk.

"We are very interested in participating in this opportunity to help define exactly what people expect from interactive technology and how to meet or exceed those demands," said Mike Atkin, vice president of marketing for Lands' End. "Personalized service has always been key to our relationship with our customer and this pilot greatly expands the services available to shoppers who prefer computer technology to the printed page. We anticipate that our well-educated customer profile will be well represented among CD-ROM users."

"En Passant provides an exciting new medium for merchandising our products," said Patrick J. Connolly, senior vice president, mail order, Williams-Sonoma. "CD-ROM -- with audio, video and editorial content -- makes an especially attractive vehicle for personalizing the shopping experience and providing the level of information that today's customer is demanding."

En Passant is organized so consumers also have the choice of exploring department areas or browsing through specific catalogs. Departments include:

-- Fashion Avenue	-- Electronic Gallery
-- For the Home	-- For Someone Special
-- Just for Kids	-- Healthy Living
-- Personal Finance	-- Going Places
-- At The Office	-- Discoveries

Editorial Content Features Information from Experts

     Each department is augmented with appropriate editorial content. For example, consumers selecting the department titled "For the Home" would see articles from Elle Decor magazine as well as merchandise from catalog companies such as Williams-Sonoma, Pottery Barn and The Horchow Collection.

     Designed to educate and inform consumers, the editorial content included on En Passant ranges from articles to video interviews from such leading experts as management consultant Tom Peters, medical authority Dr. Dean Edell, and fashion consultant Leah Feldon. Video clips from each of the experts have been captured using Apple's QuickTime video technology. In addition, En Passant features articles and excerpts from The Wall Street Journal Guide to Understanding Personal Finance, Family Life, Inc. and Hachette Filipacchi Magazines' Elle Decor. Also included are excerpts from books published by Prentice Hall Computer Publishing, Alfred A. Knopf, and Foghorn Press.

     The editorial selections provide advice on topics ranging from

financial planning, to helping with homework, to the 20 best places to
drive.

Custom Search Capabilities Make Shopping Easy

     Other interactive shopping features of En Passant include the Gift
Register and the Personal Valet. The Gift Register reminds customers in
advance about important gift-buying dates, such as anniversaries and
birthdays. The Personal Valet searches through more than 3,000 products
on the CD-ROM to provide the consumer with a catalog customized to his
or her needs. With this feature, the customer can search for a specific
item within a designated price range, such as sweaters under $100, or
the individual can build his or her own customized catalog by choosing
specific product categories such as Desk Accessories, Fitness or Women's
Apparel.

     Recipients of the pilot CD-ROM disk include a sample of registered
owners--primarily home-based users--of CD-ROM drives compatible with the
Apple Macintosh. Future plans include expanding the service to Windows
users with CD-ROM drives. Pilot participants in the U.S. will be able to
purchase items featured on the CD-ROM until January 31, 1994. Apple, EDS
and Redgate expect to analyze the results of the pilot at that time. To
order, customers will call into a central En Passant 800 number so orders
can be tracked. The caller will then be transferred to the retailer of
their choice.

Companies and consumers interested in future editions may write to:

 En Passant
 c/o Apple Computer, Inc.
 20525 Mariani Ave., MS 81/MM
 Cupertino, California 95014

_____

> STR Mail Call   "...a place for the readers to be heard"
  """"""""""""""

                         STReport's MailBag
                         """"""""""""""""""

                   Messages * NOT EDITED * for content

Let's look in the big Mac Report Mail Bag and see if anything interesting
pops up.

Aldus sent me a flyer that made me sit up and take notice. It says, "For
Macintosh Performa customers only:". Inside are some special Holiday deals
. These are really good buys too. Aldus Home Publisher (Aldus Personal
Press, fonts, clip-art and paper) for $49.95. Superpaint for $79.95.

DateBook Pro and TouchBase Pro for $34.95 each, or both for $64.95. The best deal is the whole bunch for $149.95. For more details call Aldus at 1-800-888-6293.

Chipsoft keeps reminding me that tax season is just around the corner by sending me weekly brochures touting MacInTax. The latest is filled with other software (games, educational, fonts, etc.) that you can purchase at large discount if you also purchase MacInTax. Sim Earth is $12.95 as is Reader Rabbit 1. Give Chipsoft a call at 1-619-550-5002.

Hey, "A Charter Rate Subscription to The MacAuthority is Reserved For You..." That's what the envelope says anyway. The MacAuthority is "a 12-page journal exclusively about the Macintosh." It's supposed to have useful info about all things Macintosh for the rather pricey, in my opinion, rate of $39 per year. If you're interested, write to them (sorry no phone number given) at: The MacAuthority, The Cobb Group, P.O. Box 35160, Louisville, KY 40232-9719.

T/Maker has sent along a couple of pieces this week. One is a big newsletter type thingie with special deals on all of their clip-art packages, and the other offers free Bitstream fonts if you order some of their clip-art. Any order is good for $1,290.00 worth of free fonts they say. Call T/Maker at 1-800-955-1750.

That's it for this week. As always, please feel free to send your comments or questions to me at:

                    Compuserve: 70323,1031
                       GEnie: R.NOAK
                 America OnLine: STReportRN

          _____

> TOP TEN REASONS STR Feature   "...for a chuckle or two"
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                         TOP TEN REASONS...
                         ==================

Every now and then a good one comes along....

From the Macintosh Roundtable on GEnie - Cat. 40, Topic 5, msgs 239-240

From M.STEFANI [MCH]

    Before I make any purchase, I generally like to make a list of 'pros'
and 'cons' to aid me in the final decision. Some of my thoughts:

        == TOP TEN REASONS TO STILL CHOOSE AN ATARI OVER A MAC ==

    10) Just one model in production (Falcon) makes selection a 'no-
        brainer.'
    9) Tramiel's multimedia computer development in a 'class by itself.'
    8) Still sports the largest collection of 'masochistic' programmers.

```
   7) Less time wasted reading thick, glossy monthly periodicals.
   6) No portability 'problems' due to no portable notebooks or laptops.
   5) Extensive collection of 'two' games available for the amazing
      Falcon.
   4) Limit of one dealer per metropolitan area promotes close friend-
      ships.
   3) One-piece design featuring 'mushy' keyboard way ahead of it's
      time.
   2) Ergonomically-placed joystick ports good practice for fumbling &
      cursing.
   1) Who really needs all those CD-ROMs anyway?
```

Another Top 10 from "D-W-B" [DavidWB]...

```
                    TOP 10 REASONS TO BUY A MAC
                    ---------------------------
   10 - words like CDEV, INIT and FPU are lots easier to learn than
        DOS, DEL, and INTEL
    9 - the local computer store has fewer shelves of Mac computers
        making buying decisions easier
    8 - you haven't lived until you see an Application not Found error
    7 - where else can you buy a Centris and end up with a Quadra?
    6 - Jack and his sons don't do Mac
    5 - Windoze 4.0 will break more programs than System 7.0
    4 - Macs aren't just user friendly, with added sounds, wallpapers,
        and startup screens, they are down right cuddly
    3 - Microsoft does its experimenting on that other computer, leaving
        us safe a while longer
    2 - Sim City 2000 is awesome!
    1 - Swampy don't hug IBMers
```

DELPHI's Basic Plan offers access for only $6.00 per hour, for any
baud rate. The $5.95 monthly fee includes your first hour online. For
more information, call: DELPHI Member Services at 1-800-544-4005 DELPHI is
a service of General Videotex Corporation of Cambridge, MA.

                    Try DELPHI for $1 an hour!

     For a limited time, you can become a trial member of DELPHI, and
receive 5 hours of evening and weekend access during this month for only
$5. If you're not satisfied, simply cancel your account before the end of
the calendar month with no further obligation. If you keep your account
active, you will automatically be enrolled in DELPHI's 10/4 Basic Plan,
where you can use up to 4 weekend and evening hours a month for a minimum
$10 monthly charge, with additional hours available at $3.96. But hurry,
this special trial offer will expire soon! To take advantage of this

limited offer, use your modem to dial 1-800-365-4636. Press <RET> once or
twice. When you get the Password: prompt, type IP26 and press <RET> again.
Then, just answer the questions and within a day or two, you'll officially
be a member of DELPHI!

                    TOP TEN DOWNLOADS (11/24/93)

                       (1) STORM 1.00
                       (2) STORM 1.01 PATCH
                       (3) STORM Z-MODEM PATCH
                       (4) NEW AHDI FROM ATARI
                       (5) STREPORT #9.47
                       (6) DELPHI LOGON FOR STORM
                       (7) LHARC 2.31
                       (8) PACMAN ON E'S
                       (9) PHONE BOOK
                      (10) PRENSORIUM

          DELPHI-It's getting better all the time!

     ****

                    ATARI/JAG SECTION (III)
                    =======================

          WHAT'S NEW IN THE ATARI FORUMS (November 26)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS "STORM"

     The shareware program you may have been waiting for ... STORM by Alan
Page.   Storm Version 1.00 is a shareware telecommunications program from
the original author of Flash. Features loadable Xmodem, Ymodem, Zmodem and
BPlus file transfer modules, plus VT100 and Vidtex loadable terminal
emulations. Basic script language, background file transfer and multiple
editing windows with full word wrap.

Download STORM.LZH from LIBRARY 2 of the Atari Productivity Forum (GO
ATARIPRO).

PSYCHO PIG...

     Psycho Pig 2 is a platform game of some magnitude written in STOS.
Guide the porker, who thinks he is Rambo, through four tricky levels to
rescue the baby crocodiles. You'll need to download files PIG1.ZIP and
PIG2.ZIP from LIBRARY 1 of the Atari Arts Forum (GO ATARIARTS) to play this
game.

WORD QUEST VERSION 4.00

     Download file WQ1_4.TOS from LIBRARY 5 of the Atari Productivity Forum
(GO ATARIPRO) for a substantial upgrade of Word Quest; word search puzzle
factory. Now supports use of international characters, many new dialog
boxes and more! File is self-extracting. Includes documentation and
several puzzles.

NEW FROM MISSIONWARE IN THE ATARI VENDORS FORUM (GO ATARIVEN)

     Download file F22_PR.TXT from LIBRARY 10 for a Missionware Software
Press Release regarding the release of Flash II version 2.2 - now fully
Falcon030 compatible!

     Download file F22UPG.LZH from LIBRARY 10 for the FLASH II Version 2.2
update. This file will upgrade any old version of Flash II to version 2.2.
UnLZH the file and follow the easy directions built into the program. See
the press release for details on the upgrade. This version provides for
full Falcon030 compatibility and adds support for all serial ports on the
TT030 and MegaSTe.

     _____

 > From the Atari Editor's Desk   "Saying it like it is!"
   """""""""""""""""""""""""""""

     BURP! As you're probably sitting down reading this, with a Bromo
Seltzer at your side, you're probably finally getting over that bloated
feeling from all that turkey and the rest of the fixings of your
Thanksgiving feast. Me too! I hope that you all had an enjoyable holiday.
I think that this holiday has to be my most favorite; I look forward to a
traditional turkey banquet with various side dishes!! This year, Louise
and I are spending it alone for the first time in over 9 years. Although
we usually look forward to having company, it felt good to spend a quiet
holiday together for a change! And all of the leftovers!! Hmmm, I'm
getting hungry just thinking about it, so let's change the subject quickly;
I'll wait for you to grab another Bromo!

     Let's start off by my introducing the newest member of STReport's
Atari staff!! John "Ducky" Duckworth will be bringing us "The Old Fishin'
Hole", a regular column dealing with what's available on the online
services that's really worth fishing for, and catching! More on how we
came upon that 'catchy' title (pun intended!) in a bit. For those who may
not know John from the online areas, let's have some background first.

     John, a 25 year old from Florida, is a student at the University of
Central Florida. He's hoping to have his BA degree in 1994. He's the
manager of two local independent video stores. His hobbies include
programming (looking for some free time to finish all of his started

projects!) and collecting Disneyana while spending a lot of free time at Disney World.

John has owned an Atari 800 since the early 80's. He moved on to an Atari 1040 STfm in the late 80's (actually after all of the major US software houses had already stopped releasing stuff for the ST's. He bought his present system, a Falcon030 as soon they were released. According to John, he's "never owned an IBM...don't really want to :)."

As to what John and I hope to provide you in his column, John said it much better during one of our online conversations. So, I'll let his words explain the columns to come:

> "Well, I had hoped that the focus of my column could be coverage of new shareware/pd software available for the Atari. You see, I see perusing the online services and collecting new programs as a kind of "fishing" activity. We (the users) throw out our lines to reel in (download) new and hopefully exciting programs, but we won't know what we "catch" until we get the "fish" into our "boat".   I see my position   as a kind of guide to the online waters, directing potential "fisher-people" to the best catches of the day. I would also include a "tackle box" to help people find the programs easily by providing the correct "lures" (file numbers/names) for the major online services. I could also highlight new, out of the way fishin' holes (i.e. FTP sites, other online sections) which might be of use the Atari folk, but would not be the main Atari sections."

Look for John's column further on in this section. I know that you'll enjoy it as much as I did.

So, what's been happening since we last met? Well, Jaguars are finding new homes rapidly these days. Although the new cat was scheduled to go on sale yesterday, it was pretty difficult to keep them caged for too long. Folks in the New York City area are reporting that they have some of these new pets purring along at home. Rumors are flying that some stores in the city were sold out in hours!! The excitement that these new Atari game machines is reminiscent of when the Atari 2600 was first made available; the time when the name "Atari" was a household name. It was a time when the buzz-phrase of the day was "have you played Atari today?" Sheesh, I'm getting a real warm sensation just thinking that Atari will be under many Christmas trees (and Hanukkah bushes) this year! It's been a _long_ time coming. I hope that Atari is going to be able to keep up with what I feel is going to be an incredible demand this winter. The Jaguar is one cat that's going to be in a lot of homes the next few months. Plumbers and hedgehogs; they'll be seen in the unemployment lines soon enough!

Missionware Software has just recently released the latest upgrade to Flash II. Details of what's included in this upgrade are included in Missionware's press release, further on in this issue. Alan Page, the author of the original Flash term program, has released his latest term offering, Storm, as shareware. Both programs, the upgrade to Flash II and the shareware Storm, can be found on the major online areas and many private BBSs.

Not much in the ole mailbag this week. Travis Guy, my counterpart at AEO, dropped me a vague note in this past issue. Apparently I've made an inaccurate assumption somewhere along the line. Since I've only had two "connections" to Travis the past couple of weeks, it's either my prediction that FSU would beat Notre Dame (oops!) or it's my reaction to Ron Kovacs' termination with AEO. Since Travis also picked FSU, it's most likely the

other. Travis has had two opportunities to provide the reasons behind that
decision, with the initial report, and this past issue. The note also
mentioned that if I wished to learn, just ask. Well, I'm always up for
learning more, so I'm asking. Why is Kovacs no longer with AEO? I'm sure
our readers and AEO's would be interested in knowing. Ron's been on the
online reporting scene for a long time, so it would be of great interest to
most Atari users to learn what's changed that situation. Thanks for the
note and offer to supply that information to our readers, Travis. I look
forward to reporting that information in an upcoming issue.

        Until next time...

                            Dana...

                    _____

> FLASH II Update! STR InfoFile
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                            FLASH II
                            ========

Now shipping version 2.2!

FROM: MISSIONWARE SOFTWARE
                        354 N. Winston Drive
                    Palatine, Illinois   60067-4132
                      United States of America
                        phone 708-359-9565

Missionware Software is pleased to announce the release of version 2.2 of
Flash II. This is our third update this year. Flash II originally went up
for sale in April of 1992. Version 2.2 fixes a number of problems
discovered by our customers and beta testers over the past few months.
We've added a number of enhancements as well, and now the program is fully
Falcon030 compatible! It's our second full upgrade. If you already own a
version of Flash II just download the file F22UPG.LZH and use it to patch
your current version.

Flash II is the update to the most popular Atari ST telecommunications
program ever! It's available exclusively from Missionware Software and at
an affordable price! Flash II is completely rewritten by Paul Nicholls of
Clayfield, Australia. But don't let that fool you! Flash II has the same
look and feel as previous versions of Flash...plus a slew of new features
to boot! And it's just as easy and fast to use for the telecommunications
beginner or pro!

The new features of Version 2.2 include:

* Full Falcon030 compatibility.

* Enhanced DEC VT Terminal emulations including the ability to swap
  the functions of the Delete and Backspace keys for conformance to
  standard DEC terminals.

* Enhanced ANSI terminal and graphics.

* History buffer is now included for Type Ahead editor.

* Full support for all Atari serial ports on TT030 and MegaSTe.

* Terminal mode now displays either the real time clock or a timer.
  When the timer is displayed, it now runs all the time.

* Search-Next mode added in editor. Control-F9 keystrokes can be used
  for this new function.

* Enhanced DO scripting language, including:

    PORT: Selects the port to be used.
    CLOCK: Selects Clock display in terminal mode.
    TIMER: Selects Timer display in terminal mode.
    DBPATH: Sets path for Block file operations.
    KERMIT: Selects various Kermit transfer options.

Naturally, all of your old favorite Flash II features are still available:

* DO script files compatible with older versions of Flash!

* All macros use the familiar Flash DO script format!

* Easily setup the parameters for each BBS you call...this includes
  everything from ASCII upload/download options to baud rate!

* You can program up to 20 individual and separate macros for each
  BBS plus an additional 10 global macros !

* Displays RLE & GIF pictures either on or off line! You can also
  save or load these pictures for later review!

* Supports the following terminal types: TTY, VIDTEX, VT52, ANSI,
  VT100, VT101, VT102, VT200, VT300 & PRESTEL.

* Includes full support for RTS/CTS. This mode can now be turned
  on and off by the user.

* Includes Automatic Answer mode!

* Includes Auto Boards mode - Preselect the board(s) you wish to dial
  and when Flash II is launched either manually from the desktop by
  you, or automatically by some other program launcher, Flash II will
  wakeup and dial the board(s) you've got selected. It will also wait
  for the proper time to dial these boards.

* Includes full featured GEM text editor with: merge, block
  commands, cut & paste, search & replace, paragraph reformatting; user
  tab settings, page width, full keyboard cursor and delete control
  and more!

* Supports the ST, IBM and DEC character sets, including IBM

graphics characters!

* Includes Silent Line for background file transfers!

* Supports the following upload/download protocols: ASCII, Xmodem,
  Ymodem, Ymodem-G, Zmodem, Modem7, WXmodem, CIS B, Kermit and SEAlink!
  And all of these protocols are built into the program...no external
  modules required!!!

* Zmodem supports the selection of AutoStart and Streaming options.
  If you prefer to use an external Zmodem protocol with Flash II, you
  can now force Flash II's Zmodem autostart mode to off. For BBS' that
  don't support "streaming", this too can now be turned off.

* Logs all on line time and calculates your approximate costs for you!

* New version written in assembler! Fast!

* Runs on all ST, STe and TT's

* Supports "Install Application". You can create a DO script that
  can be used to launch Flash II from the desktop and force it to dial
  up and go online for you, all automatically!

* Both the Terminal and Editor have been enhanced significantly for
  both speed and ease of use. You'll be amazed at how fast the new
  Flash II is!

* A new "BReak" script command is added which permits the sending of a
  terminal break to the host computer while a script is running.

Missionware Software's upgrade policy remains the same for the new Version
2.2! We will continue to upgrade any old version of Flash! (copyright
Antic Software) for just $30 US, plus $4 shipping and handling (US and
Canada), $8 worldwide. Or, you can purchase Flash II, version 2.1
outright, for only $49.95 US plus the shipping and handling charges
applicable to your area. To order, or for more information, contact:

                        Missionware Software
                        354 N. Winston Drive
                     Palatine, IL   60067-4132
                      United States of America

                        phone 708-359-9565

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> Atari United STR InfoFile
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""

ATARI UNITED! PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release:

Mountain View, CA--November 21, 1993--As part of its ongoing effort to
unite Atari owners with support groups and developers, ATARI UNITED! wishes

to announce to North American Atari owners the existence of the Falcon Owners Group. The Falcon Owners Group was originally established in March of 1993 and is based in the United Kingdom. The Falcon Owners Group (FOG) provides support for Falcon owners through several services and discount prices for the Falcon specific shareware library which is handled by a professional outfit and accepts international and credit card orders. The Falcon Owners Group Magazine is produced four times a year and distributed with a high density cover disk. This mini-magazine is a legal page sized compilation of useful information concerning hardware and software for the Atari Falcon030. In the 27-page September issue, reviews of Ishar 2 and new Falcon shareware shared space with some extensive Q&A and an ST software compatibility chart.

There are a few noticeable typos in the magazine, and little in the way of graphics, but it is rather well laid out for such a new publication. They also provide two BBS for members in the UK (Tel 0454 317047 or 0454 881095) providing Atari message bases and Falcon030 software downloads. While some of the information presented in the magazine may not be new to those who spend their free time online, FOG exists as an effective repository of Falcon specific information and is nearly a complete stand alone source for a Falcon user. Richard Davey, the Club Chairman, is actively seeking the establishment of a North American branch to the FOG, and anyone interested in founding a US or Canadian site is strongly encouraged to contact FOG and request the information needed to spread Falcon030 support to and from the UK.

The only unfortunate side to all this is that they do not have an Internet address yet and while the Membership is only 16.99 pounds for Europe, people in North America will have to pay 20.00 pounds. They accept Visa and Mastercard, or checks made payable to the 'Falcon Owners Group' and sent to:

                         FOG
                    10 Oak Drive
              Portishead, Bristol, Avon
                     BS20 8QS
                  Tel: 0272 424743

For more information regarding ATARI UNITED! please contact:

    Patti Barbiero   Gordie Meyer
    P.O. Box 691   P.O. Box 1982
    Mountain View, CA 94042-0691   Ames, IA 50010-1982
    (415) 903-9787   (515) 232-1627
    abarbiero@delphi.com   biblinski@delphi.com

To register, please provide the information below, and mail to:

                    ATARI UNITED!
                     P.O. Box 691
              Mountain View, CA 94042-0691

or email your registration, questions, comments, etc to:

                  abarbiero@delphi.com

Name (Last, First, MI): _____
Mailing Address: _____

```
                 _____
City, State, Zip:  _____
Phone Number:      _____
Online Address:    _____

Computer Model:       ___  520 ST      ___  520 STe     ___  TT
                      ___  1040 ST     ___  1040 STe    ___  F030
                      ___  Mega ST     ___  Mega STe

Computer Serial Number:  _____
                                      (optional)

User Group (if a member):_____

(     ) Yes!  Please include me in your list of possible  contacts
         for isolated Atari TOS owners in my area.

(     ) Also please make my name and address available to other
         Atari related concerns.

(     ) Please keep all information on my registration form
         confidential.


            _____
```

> LEXICOR IN LONDON VIA DELPHI! STR FOCUS!
  ""

                16 BIT SHOW IN LONDON AT WEMBLEY
                ================================

LEXICORWORLD>

   A decent presence by Atari Users and Atari Developers. People who were
there on and about Atari were:

       16/32 Systems, Hisoft, CGS, Gasteiner, Compo, STL, Power Computing,
       Silica Systems, Best Electronics, PD Club, and a few others who
       were generally wholesaling Games and PD Stuff for the Atari...
       And of course Lexicor :) *grin*

.Gordie>
   <g>

LEXICORWORLD>
   We demonstrated our new NOVA Plus Board, alongside the regular Atari
   Lexicor rendering stuff, demo'ed Raystart with great success, Chronos
   Falcon, and our new FLI Player and FLI Builder for TGA and GIF, which
   supports single palette per frame.

   We had ourselves 2 TT's, 2 Falcons and an ST to run our stuff...
   the stand size was about 9x2+

Hisoft and Microdeal, who are now one company, showed some very interesting stuff for the Falcon. Including a Digitizer for around 149 Pounds that will digitize on an ST/Mega or Falcon and/or maybe TT in True Color, even if you do NOT have a True Color system... Works very nice for the Falcon, and for such an affordable price too.

True Image is a new product they had, however I don't think they had it for sale yet. It goes along the lines of Studio Photo or Chagall, however, I am not sure about its functionality.

CGS showed Da's Vector and had it for sale. Da's Vector Pro and Da's Picture were demoed, but not sold yet. Lexicor Software, incidentally, will be supporting the Da's Animations Format.

Inshape 1.0 and 1.02 was also for sale, however version 2.0 is not to be released until next year as it appears. It's beta phase can only render in Phong, no raytracing....

Compo were selling Falcons, and I think he sold about 2 or 3 at the show... They didn't have too many new things, I think... not just yet. Gasteiner, Silica and STL as well as Power were a lot on Disk

Drives, Mice and so forth, accessories for Atari, PC and Amiga... Silica distributes Crazy Dot's in the UK.

Best was there too, selling his usual stuff, accessories, neato, gadgets and toys :) but I think till now the show was a disappointment

 for him... He DID however buy some games :)

There was a wide variety of Atari ST Games and Falcon Games too, available at a few stores' booths, I think around 10 places or so... And also quite a bit of Atari PD... 5 PD Libraries total I think.

Overall the visit so far has been disappointing. Attendance was FAR lower than expected. Through today, it is estimated that ONLY 3000 or fewer people have come... It was a very Empty Show.

.Gordie>
   What kind of attendance has it had in the past?

LEXICORWORLD>
   Around 10-15,000. Last year I couldn't even take a break! Now, there was enough time to wander around. We did quite well though, considering the amount of people that came, but it wasn't as busy as it was last year.

BSUMMER>
   Yat, any new products being shown in the graphics area? What programs seem to be most popular from Lex??

LEXICORWORLD>
   Xenomorph, i.e. Phoenix, sold very well, the ANM-Link stormed as all users wanted it :) Prism Paint 2 was hailed as well, as it really supports the Atari ST very nicely. David Oldcorn is writing the JPEG Debugger, so Prism Paint 2 will support the Falcon DSP in this jpeg module.

Raystart did reasonably. Most people have yet to understand the great

advantage of analytical objects, which makes raystart so fast! Faster
   than any raytracer even with a Math Co-Pro, it can raytrace a perfect
   sphere in 18 seconds or less on a Falcon!!

   The new FLI Player had many people impressed and ALSO the new NOVA
   VDI which made it 30% faster than it's predecessor.

BSUMMER>
   Yat, in your absence, I uploaded a few Phoenix renderings to Delphi...
   Any word when Phoenix 2 will be shipping???

LEXICORWORLD>
   No.... sorry...

BSUMMER>
   Lee had told me Phoenix 2 is finished but awaiting manuals???

LEXICORWORLD>
   That is true.

.Gordie>
   There were some bright spots, despite the overall poor attendance. Is
   the 16 Bit Show an Atari/Amiga show, for the most part?

LEXICORWORLD>
   It is an Atari/Amiga/PC Show really...

.Gordie>
   So the 3000 was split between 3 platforms. That is pretty dismal.

LEXICORWORLD>
   Yes... but most were Amiga/Atari.

BSUMMER>
   As it was also a PC show, I'm amazed by the downward trend in
   attendance.

LEXICORWORLD>
   True...

.Gordie>
   Was there some big football or rugby game today? <g> That might have
   affected the attendance. <g>

LEXICORWORLD>
   no ;)

.Gordie>
   Ah, too bad. Well, Yat, I appreciate your coming online today with
   that news, in any event.

BSUMMER>
   Well have a safe flight, and looking forward to chatting again, mate!!!

.Gordie>
   We'll let you go get some sleep, or whatever... <g>

LEXICORWORLD>
   Thanks!

At this point, Yat left. As it was getting late in London, and he'd been
working a show all day, Yat wanted to keep the CO as short as possible, so
he could get enough rest for the next day at the show.

       _____

> Old Fishin' Hole STR Feature
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

INTRODUCING.....

                         THE OLD FISHIN' HOLE
                         ====================

A Guide to the Online PD/Shareware Waters.

by John R. Duckworth

     Welcome to my first installment of "The Old Fishin' Hole". It is my
sincere hope that this column will help you get the most out of your online
time, and to assist you in choosing which new PD/Shareware packages you may
be interested in downloading. Often times it is difficult to determine
just how useful (or professional) a program may be from reading a download
description, just as you never know what type of fish you've caught until
you have it reeled in. I will do my best in the following installments to
rate program packages fairly and honestly while keeping in mind that most
of our PD/Shareware programs are made by caring and meticulous individuals
who want to see the best brought out for our beloved platform. I always
appreciate feedback (and new stuff from programmers), so send comments,
suggestions, and chocolate to: JDUCKWORTH@delphi.com . Now, with my
intentions out of the way let's see what we have on the stringer this
week...

     First up is a utility recently ported to the Atari ST series called
"PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) v. 2.3". PGP is a public-key encryption package
coded by Philip Zimmermann originally for MSDOS and Unix. Since the package
was release under The Free Software Foundation's GNU general public
license, source code has been readily available enabling the port for the
ST series. If you have never heard of public-key encryption systems before,
let me elaborate. This approach to cryptography allows reliable encrypting
of files or E-mail without the need for a previous secure channel to send a
key. Using this method, a user simply generates a public/private key

combination, and spreads the public key to whomever he or she wishes to have a copy (for future private communication). The private key is kept safely on the users system for encryption/extraction of text (or any file in fact) using a pass phrase for security. In return the user of PGP must have the public keys of those people whom he will be sending encrypted files to. The above may sound like Greek at first, but after using the package, and reading the extensive documentation is becomes understandable. The main file is a .TTP program which accepts command line arguments similar to those found in archivers. The program is not GEM based, but runs fine under MultiTOS since all output is automatically redirected to a window. The commands are straightforward and almost foolproof, with online help available with the command -h. If you have a need for industrial strength encryption (in fact it encrypts communications so well, the US Government is trying to stop its distribution) I highly recommend this program. PGP should run with no problems on ANY Atari ST/TT/Falcon.

Next in line is a shareware application called "MyDraw v. 1.10" from Helmut Neumann. This is a full featured and professionally presented GEM drawing program. MyDraw allows the user to select from a variety of different tools including boxes, circles, text, line and many more. This version of MyDraw also supports SpeedoGDOS and allows the user to rotate text, draw bezier curves, and perform some graphing functions. Although the program and all menus are in German, the program is very intuitive and a translated resource file was recently uploaded so be sure to get both files. Recently I wanted to draw a flowchart in an AtariWorks document. Anyone who has tried to use the drawing features of AtariWorks realizes that it would not be a simple task, if possible at all. That is where MyDraw comes in; simply draw your needed flowcharts/pictures and save them as GEM metafiles. AtariWorks can import these files and resize them as necessary. This is another must-download package. MyDraw 1.10 should work on any Atari ST/TT/Falcon with GDOS/SpeedoGDOS that can display a resolution of 640x400.

The last program on my stringer is a game for STe and Falcon users called "Pacman on E's" programmed by Stuart Innes of Digital Dreams in Scotland. This is yet another Pac Man variation (and I though Hack Man was going to be hard to top) with 20 levels, sampled stereo sound (finally a shareware game to take advantage of the advanced sound capabilities), and only a one player option. For a souped up version including two player simultaneous play, more sampled sound, and 100 levels be sure to register with the author. Gameplay is smooth and joystick response is very good (although a bit hard to control at high speeds). The sound is probably one of the best parts of the game, although I tend to turn off the music since it gets very repetitive. If you aren't tired of this genre, "Pacman on E's" may be worth a look. "Pacman on E's" will ONLY work on the STe/Falcon since it utilizes DMA sound, and extended palette, and hardware scrolling.

Well, that's all the space I have for this week. Check back again next week for even more fresh catches and hints on what's worth reeling in. Look in the tackle box below for appropriate lures (file numbers) and locations for this weeks mentioned programs.

```
+---------------------------------------------------------------+
|    Old Fishin Hole Tackle Box      *                          |
+---------------------------------------------------------------+
|    PGP v. 2.3                                                  |
|         Internet - ftp.tu-clausthal.de (pub/atari/util/pgp/)  |
|      Delphi (Atari Advantage Group - read pgp)                |
|    MyDraw v. 1.10                                             |
|         Delphi (Atari Advantage Group - read mydraw 1.10)     |
```

```
         |          GEnie (Atari RT - #28500, #30692)              |
         |     Pacman on E's                                        |
         |          Delphi (Atari Advantage Group - read pacman)    |
         +---------------------------------------------------------+
```

 * The Tackle Box is meant to provide assistance in finding files mentioned
in the column. It should not be considered a COMPLETE listing and is
provided for convenience only. Delphi Atari Advantage files should be found
in the Recent Arrivals section of the database until moved to their
appropriate sections.

     ""

                        STReport's "EDITORIAL CARTOON"
                     """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

> A "Quotable Quote"   "A SIGN OF THE CHANGING TIMES"
   """"""""""""""""""

          "REMEMBER WHEN THE ADDAMS FAMILY WAS CONSIDERED TOO SCARY
                   FOR YOUNGSTERS TO BE WATCHING ON TV AND...
           THE JACKSONS WERE CONSIDERED VERY GOOD ROLE MODELS FOR THE KIDDIES?"

                           ..a historical teacher

     """

> DEALER CLASSIFIED LIST STR InfoFile   * Dealer Listings *
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